

THE BLIND LEADING THOSE
THAT SEE
Robert Gordon Anderson

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The Blind Leading Those That See

A Record of One Who Did Not Stand and Wait

By Robert Gordon Anderson

USUALLY one conceives of a blind man as something awkward and helpless, stumbling along with perhaps a cane and a dog, certainly with a cane, someone to be helped across the street, given a moment's pity, then dismissed from the mind; or else as a man dwelling in a prison, darker than any convict's, and without even his chance of reprieve or escape. If the names of those who have overleaped the barriers happen to occur to us, it is merely as miraculous exceptions, legendary heroes and heroines, not quite of the flesh.

What was my wonder, then, when a friend took me to visit a blind man who would play neither of these rôles, would fit in neither picture. The walls of his house were lined with bookcases, his porch with screens he had made. Casement windows opened on a studio in the garden; and studio and casement windows were the work of his hands.

When we entered he rose from the piano—a tall, swarthy and strangely erect man of about thirty-three—and came forward with outstretched hand, gauging the distance well. Later he played for us some of the exquisite compositions he has published, tuned in on an ordinary radio, and joined in a game of poker with pinpricked cards. Then, for our refreshment, he walked, with a little deliberate sureness, perhaps, but not bumping into things, down two flights of stairs, to return with glasses and bottles of some cooling drink, which, without spilling, he served.

Throughout the visit, and others that through a ripening friendship later followed, he appeared not only singularly free from the eccentricities that stamp the afflicted but refreshingly natural.

In ten minutes you forgot that he was blind.

The postman has just brought a letter, a long one, too, composed by him on an ordinary typewriter. These pages of mine, when they go to the printer, will show typographical corrections; here an *o* will have been struck instead of its neighbor *p*, there a "cap" will be out of alignment. His is flawless copy, really beautiful to look at, not a single transposition even; the letters all alike in hue.

Naturally questions arose in my mind: What does one see behind the veil? Is there a compensating light to take the place of our electricity and sunshine? Also the mechanics of the blind fascinated me. How does he navigate, orientate himself, get his positions, this eternal chess player, forever blindfolded and playing in the dark?

Spurred On by the Sighted

IN SHORT, and through no morbid curiosity, I wanted to get on the inside of a blind man. So, when I came to know him so well I knew the questions would not hurt, I put them to him. And this is what he, Roland Farley, told me, simply, plainly, and without stressing one pathetic note:

"It happened when I was five, in a little Rocky Mountain town, Aspen, Colorado. I was sitting on the porch one afternoon, all dressed up in a white sailor suit, with no place to go. In fact, mother told me not to stir off the porch—afraid, I guess, that I would spoil. But just then along came a jenny on the hillside back of us. She was a she-ass, you know, sort of a derelict, with burrs sticking in her coat; and the town boys had been ragging her. By her side trotted a little colt, and I thought it was the prettiest thing I had ever seen. I forgot all about my white suit and went up to pet it, when Jenny suddenly wheeled, lashed out with her hoofs and struck me here." He pointed to his eyes. "A butcher's boy picked me up and brought me home.

"For six months I lay bandaged, absolutely in the dark. Finally, when I got up, I found I could still see a little; say, a red rubber ball on the grass like a red blur on a streak of green. I didn't realize how much I could or, rather, couldn't see, and I don't think my parents, sympathetic as they

were, did either. Probably they believed I could see more than I really did; and gradually what I had left of sight was going.

"One day as I ran around completely missing the ball, I heard my father cry, 'Good God! He can't see the ball!' I can still hear that cry. However, I think it was rather the horror in his voice than what his exclamation signified that frightened me. And I soon forgot about my condition. Indeed, I don't think I ever consciously said to myself, even in a child's words: 'This is a great blow!' I was happy just digging holes in the ground. Fortunately this unconsciousness is natural to a child.

"I had a sister just two years older than I—seven that would be—who did a great deal for me. It is strange that at that age she could so understand. She would play with me, lead me around, and read to me by the hour. It's through her interest in me that later, when she grew up, she became a teacher of the blind.

"At eight they sent me away to a school for the blind. I say 'sent me away'; I was glad to go; and I wasn't homesick. Like any normal boy I was eager for the new world and all its activities—I thought there'd be a lot of new games to play.

"Here I found several dozen boys, most of them blind but some that could see pretty well. You used to find that in blind schools, and do sometimes still. These institutions are supported by the state or else are privately endowed; and some parents are glad to take advantage of the board and tuition, if any slight defect in eyesight can be used as an excuse.

"It was a good thing for us, though, for these nearly well boys increased our opportunities, could help us, read to us and all that. Besides, they spurred us on; would start sports that we never would have tried but in which, once having been started, we tried our best to equal them. It's the only thing in the world for the blind—to mingle with

'the sighted,' as we call those that can see—and perhaps our teachers realized that and winked at the rules for eligibility.

"So it was not altogether a gloomy life. We rough-housed around in play hours like ordinary boys, and had our honor system. We would smoke once in a while, but would own up to it when caught, not lie about it. And we played regular ball. The umpire would call 'Hit!' when the pitcher delivered the ball, and once in a while one of us would hit it. And one or two got so expert that they could line them out more often, having learned to gauge the arrival of the ball at the plate by the umpire's call and the whiz of the sphere.

"Then, too, we had our regular grudge fights, formally carried out in pitched rings, like those you read about in Tom Brown at Rugby. If, as sometimes happened, one of the boys could partially see, to make things even, the fights took place after dark."

Building a Synthetic World

"MEANTIME, through these years I had turned from a child with perfect vision to one partially seeing, then to one practically blind. I qualify that, because I could still see the sidewalk at noon with the bright sun on it, like a blurry white strip between two other blurred patches of green; or the shape of a man between two bright windows but without form or outline, like some ghostly shape of a bear I saw in my dreams. But that didn't help much; it wasn't even like 'men as trees walking.' So very gradually I came into the world of the sightless and learned to develop the sense of hearing, of touch; above all, the faculty of attentiveness, which is the blind child's first secret of success.

"I was now investigating the world, but in a different way from normal children. I was seeing with my fingers, also I was seeing things synthetically, in fragments, then building them up to form a whole. It's hard, if you haven't thought about it, to realize what that means. But the normal child sees things in composition, usually as a whole. I would have to put together.

"For instance, I would apprehend a flower in a vase in this order: First the flower itself, a thing of irregularly shaped objects, soft as velvet and clustered together on a stem, and called petals. That stem would be in a vase, which in turn was on a round flat-topped object called a table; and the table itself was in such and such a position with relation to the other objects in the room. Always shape, texture and the relation of one object to another would be uppermost in my mind—rarely, if ever, color. I would build up a horse by feeling first the soft nozzle, the forehead, forelock, ears, neck, withers, and so on. And I was pretty sure of each detail, while the ordinary child of my age would see the whole room in its setting, the whole horse as a unit. I was synthetic, and he, if asked to draw either object, would turn analytic, probably having to look twice to draw or describe any part with any accuracy.

"As I grew older I still went through the same method, building up bit by bit, though of course more rapidly. The blind think, you see, as the well man reads.

"You might understand this if I were writing a book and tried to describe the school. Instead of giving a picture rich in color and atmosphere and one in which you saw the whole group of buildings, trees and campus at once, mine would have nothing of the impressionistic about it; it would be more mathematical, more like a chart. It would say that in my room the desk was to the north, the iron bed against the south wall, or the door to the left. If I went out of that door and turned right I would enter Smith's room; if I turned left and went downstairs I would walk out on a porch, then down a path to reach a playground, which was surrounded by a fence, and so on. I might convey a little of the warmth of the sunshine under a certain big tree, also

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PHOTO. BY ARNOLD GENTHE, N. Y. C.

Roland Farley

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Personally I was curious to find out how he managed some of the more mechanical tasks—the screening of the porches, the making of the bookcases which stood in his well-furnished room, and the making of casement windows, the panes of which he had cut with a diamond, mortising the new pieces in the strips of wood and weather-stripping the sashes with the greatest neatness. Also he rigged up a windlass one day and hoisted to the attic pieces of furniture weighing four hundred pounds. All these things would take a lot of ingenuity, even for an ordinary man, and he had to be more than ordinarily ingenious.

He was building a little studio in the back yard at the time, so I had an opportunity to observe how he went at it. This, too, was done with no assistance—except when he asked someone to read the spirit level. He could not see the mercury.

To begin with, he planted four eleven-foot poles, three feet and a half deep in holes he had dug. Across the poles he nailed beams at the top, also four at the bottom, these being set true by the aid of the spirit level. Knowing the length of these beams, he then calculated the distances apart necessary for the uprights, setting them at intervals of sixteen inches and determining the precise spots with a piece of string. Everything was true. When he came to the gables he took another piece of string equal to the length of the beam on which the gable was to rest, doubled it, and so found the center, placing a nail scratch there to mark it. On this an upright, which he had sawed to the proper height, was raised, tested by his square, and the rafters were put in place.

The ship-lap was then neatly applied and the string again called on to place the window. Doubling this and finding the center, he cut a nail scratch around it and neatly sawed the aperture.

I saw him start the shingling by first nailing a row along the eaves, then cutting a measuring board six inches wide and bringing the next row squarely up to it. But I did not see him finish more than three rows. When I came back a few days later it was finished, also the double flooring. It was an expert job, too, looking quite professional. In fact, the shingles look as true as the squares on a checkerboard, with the exception of two shingles. I asked him about these as I looked from the window of the den.

"The two over the crotch of the gable?" he asked.

Those were the ones, and he chuckled.

"Oh, those! Well, there was a Polack cutting the grass. He was watching me, thought shingling was easy, and asked to try it. For fun I let him do those two, and you see the result."

Coloring the World From Memory

This compact house had been built by his efforts alone with the exception of a reading of the level, those two shingles, and also—I almost forgot—one plank which a friend had sawed. And I had watched that friend. He was the head and father of a family, a gifted playwright, and he had his eyesight. Yet first he had put the board on a sawhorse and sawed an inch, then carried it to a stump, then to the porch, and finally wound up by placing it on the ground and trying to saw it downward. I probably would have been almost as bad. As the blind man said, "He walked a mile to saw a foot." And during this process the blind man had nailed half the ship-lap on his walls!

"You remember," he asked as I looked out of the window at the result of his work, "how I explained the way a blind child thinks—in fragments, synthetically, forever building up? Well, you see that house as a whole and in its setting. And I, while I think more rapidly than I did when a child, go through this process: In my mind I go to this door, walk down stairs, turn right, left, left, right, go out of the back door and walk carefully to the house—and

the house itself is conceived in its integral parts as I built it, all in a chain, bit by bit. As I say, I go through the process rapidly; so likewise, in a motion picture which is made up of countless individual motions, it may seem one picture, but it is all conceived in fragments just the same. My imagination cannot leap at any object, no matter how quickly I think. It's all like reading. When I hear one of Maxim Gorky's stories, for instance, I visualize and put together the various details—the poky village people, the busy wood-burning engine and funny cars, the steppes all around them. A well man does that in reading, but I do it all the time.

"Reading is a godsend—attentive reading, I mean. A blind man can not only train his memory by it and store his mind but also quicken his imagination. And when I first realized the world had shrunk to the length of my arm I substituted imagination for sight. And so, though I naturally think of things in the way just described, I have made keener my remembered conceptions of color, and kept them alive more than most of the blind. I can deliberately sketch in, think in, color and other qualities afterward—after I have thought of objects and scenes in the terms of form and outline, texture and relative position. But unless I stop to think of it I do not put them in."

Dictating Music

"And yet my mind is stored full of mental images. In my dreams I often see the ocean and its waves, though I was born and spent my five seeing years in an inland town. Possibly that is an inheritance—it almost makes one believe in reincarnation; or are our imaginations so designed that we, the accidentally blinded, can deliberately build up these things from the little that we remember and what later we hear described?"

"Sometimes I doubt if the man born blind can do that. He has no visual memories at all. How can he tell what light looks like? Can you say to him it looks as a violin sounds? Where I remember blues, indigos, reds and greens, how can he visualize them? The sight part of the brain has lain fallow and he can have no more conception of hue than you have of the fourth dimension, unless, as I say, there is such a thing as inherited memory. Still, I doubt, when I hear a girl who has been born blind say she prefers a red dress to a blue, whether she really conceives of either color. But in all except these qualities and in those which I have deliberately cultivated I am like the born blind.

"And we really have no more natural dexterity of the hands, except what comes through practice. The minute a man goes blind or deaf, Nature doesn't at once spring to his aid by sharpening the other senses. Our fingers, through constant use, are even more calloused and less sensitive than yours. Ours are more attentive, that's all.

"Some of us have a greater awareness, perhaps, but that's through keener attention or else is an individual quality. I can tell that it is a sunny day, and that not by the warmth alone. I know, too, when a room is attractive and pleasant—for it has that personality, that feel. It is possible that inanimate objects have some emanation; sometimes I am inclined to believe that way, for without touching things I can sense when a room is in disorder, and as for people, I can tell when I enter a room, though they are absolutely motionless, that they are there.

"Perhaps, too, the subconscious is with us more reliable, more released, than with most people. I use it constantly in composing music. For instance, I memorized the lyric for my song, *The Night Wind*, sixteen lines, in five minutes from two readings aloud by the physicist, Doctor Lovejoy,

who often spends an evening with me. It was in December, a blowy night; and after he had gone I let my subconscious and the wind do the work. That really blew the musical setting into my mind.

"My mother read a poem of Shelley's to me long ago. For two years I never thought of it. Then suddenly one morning while I was taking a cold plunge the words sang themselves in my mind. It's just a question of letting the words sink in the subconscious. There they mill around until they find their musical mates. Sometimes I sit down at the piano and nothing comes. I wait and sit down again on another day, and suddenly the crystallization, the wedding of word and note, takes place. Of course there is labor afterward on chromatics and harmony, and work has gone before in years of training, so that I unconsciously think in musical terms; but I rely so much on the subconscious, as, I think, even the better writers do. And perhaps that part of me has been better developed because I am to some extent shut off from the outer world. Why, occasionally I start composing, say, at ten in the evening, and forget the flight of time. When I come to, I feel by my watch—tell by the position of the hands—that it is four in the morning, and it has all seemed like ten minutes.

"As for writing it down, I don't do that. I just dictate it aloud. My wife is not a musician, but I gave her a little book with the musical signs and terms. And without any training she has learned to take my dictation down, like this: 'Key of three flats; four-four time; right hand has trill on G below middle C, half note; trill on A for half note. Left hand has trill on G, octave lower, for whole note. The next bar is'—and so on. Not so hard after you try it. Of course you have to strain your head a bit sometimes in composing, for where a normal man can refer to what has gone before and what he has already written down, I have to carry it all in my head."

That "not so hard" was characteristic. He has composed in this way, at thirty-three, no less than fifty instrumental pieces—sonatas for cellos, for violin; a romance for a piano quintet; ballades, cantatas, intermezzos, polonaises, waltzes, concertos, several children's suites and even delightful bits of jazz, and over one hundred songs. He began as a writer of songs, taking up instrumental composition later. Recently he has been elected a member of the Beethoven Association, which accepts to its membership only recognized musicians, those who have really arrived; and singers returning from Europe say that in Germany the critics proclaim his songs as among the best that have come out of America.

What the Afflicted Owe to Life

All in all, it is a really notable achievement, particularly when you come to consider that he has had to memorize every lyric and every bar of both clefs of many score pieces, then dictate them sign by sign and bar by bar; also that he got all his musical education and learned a thousand compositions from blind point, or having them painfully and carefully dictated to him. All of which may be "not so hard," as he says; but sometimes I doubt it. And it is because he demands so much of himself that he can ask so much of others.

"Blind and deaf people," he declares, "are their own worst enemies. They feel that the world owes them a living and forget that they owe something to the world." I thought that rather glorious common sense and a noble bit of philosophy, seeing that he himself was blind. Later he went on to explain it:

"The blind, you see, persist in herding with their kind. When twenty or thirty get

together they are in their own little world, and happy for the time. There everything is fine or at least seems so. They have their little community, all on a level, no inhibitions, all penned in; but it's a fools' paradise. Twelve years of this and they're fit for nothing else; certainly not for association with anyone outside their world. And they coddle themselves in their eccentricities, stumble over things, paw over people, and are sloppy in dress. And they increase in clumsiness as they mature—all because they won't even try to get out of themselves.

"It is so, too, with people otherwise afflicted; say, deaf people. I know one, a graduate of a deaf school, who sits at home stewing over this and that, imagining the neighbors are saying things about her until her husband is nearly crazy. And when, so that he won't go crazy, he goes out, she imagines that he, this patient fellow who has been so devoted to her, has other interests that supersede her.

"It's in a way pathetic, this supersensitiveness, and I feel every sympathy for those obsessed by it, but it's what I'd like to hit at more than anything else. And educators and all people caring for the blind or deaf should root out that first of all. That's where I quarrel with them."

A Blind Man's Fortune

"Even as a kid I realized this. I just wouldn't yield to self-pity. And I can remember having the consciousness suddenly, 'You can't see yourself, but others can see you!' That made me take a pride in the way I looked and dressed, as well as in the things I could do. And I started at fourteen to make outside connections so as to keep myself normal. If a boy could do that, surely a grown man can. To me now blindness is no worse than a bad stomach; nothing but an inconvenience.

"I've tried to tell others of these things; have stressed this getting away from blind psychology, this mingling in normal life, and advised them more concretely; for instance, to stop reading Braille and point whenever they can; but they won't listen. And those who rely on these get so confirmed in the habit that they can't listen intelligently even to oral reading. And they can't play music to dictation either. If they would only try it they'd find themselves nearer the normal, and would have access to vast libraries you cannot get in Braille or musical print for the blind. A girl could be hired for a few dollars a week to read music aloud. One could take care of from a dozen to fifteen pupils.

"Yet only the other day, when I advised a girl to go to the Three Arts Club and study with the sighted, she dreaded the thought, was too timid. Now she has decided, I believe, to go to a regular institution for the blind; and unless I miss my guess, there she will end her days.

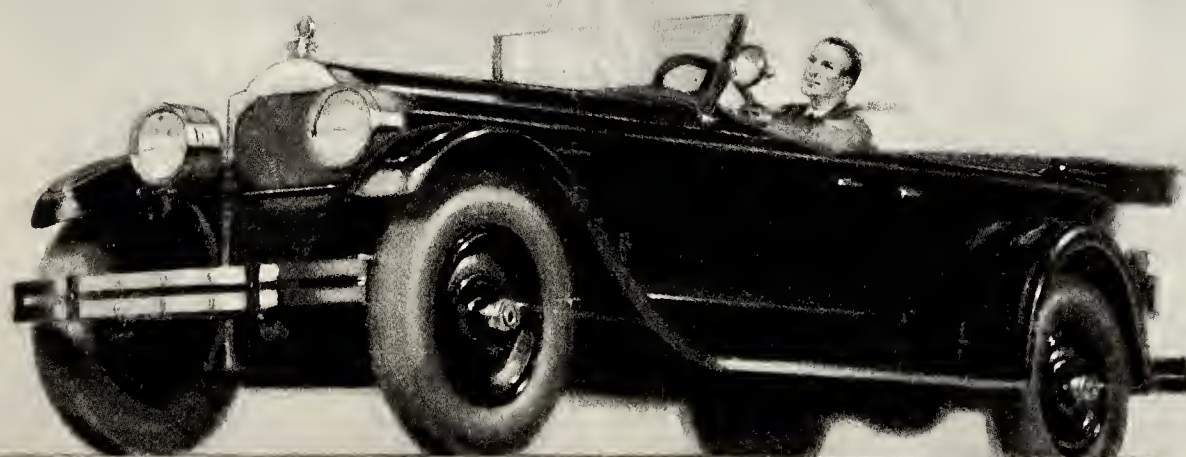
"Oh, I could brood still if I would let myself; think when no one's around, 'There's a book I'd like to read, but I can't; or an exhibit at some museum and I could be very fond of pictures!' But I don't let myself dwell on such things. Nor do I get up carelessly in a room with which I've had no chance to become familiar and smash my hostess' best vase and have people running to help me. I sit still, hearing them move all about me, getting up to light cigarettes, offer another a chair, or show some photograph. In a way, then, I might consider myself a prisoner, but I am happy in my intercourse with my friends. Friendship is the most comforting thing I've known; it's better than seeing or hearing. In the knowledge of this I have learned to accept my limitations, until acceptance has become second nature.

"And for the encouragement of others, let me repeat that this is all true—that a blind man can carve out much of his own fortune, though two or three years ago I found the greatest help in the world—that of a devoted wife. Her love and sympathy are the greatest joy to me. But still

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the sounds of the voices and bells, but in the main it would be like that—dealing with objects, their feel, distances and the turns. You see? That is the way, at least, the usual blind man's description would run, and in such terms; though by training my memory, listening attentively to reading, and enriching my imagination, I might be able to give other values.

"And one arrives at this point by mingling with normal people.

"It was rather early, as I remember it, that I first realized that salvation lay that way; and at fourteen I started to make all the outside connections I could. I have kept it up ever since.

"Very early, too, I resolved not to rely alone on touch but to use the other senses as much as possible. A disagreeable experience at the age of ten determined me on this. My father had come to visit me. I was called, and when I entered the room one of the teachers led me up to my father without telling me his name, and placed my hands on his face. I felt his features all over, then his head and when I came to a bald spot said, 'Johnson'; the name of someone then connected with the school. They told me it was my father, and I can remember still the feeling of humiliation and embarrassment. Young as I was, it struck me as rude to finger another's face. I knew I wouldn't like mine fussed over that way. And never again, although the teacher tried to persuade me to try to recognize people by that method, would I attempt it. Boylike, I wanted to be like other people, not marked by the eccentricities that stamp the blind. You can guess what I felt if you've ever seen them pawing over a stranger's features or childishly feeling a woman's skirt. It's all right perhaps for one with the mind of a child, or one both deaf and blind, but not for a self-respecting blind man with all his other faculties.

"Right from the start—that is, as soon as I was old enough really to think—I scorned self-pity; and I didn't relish much more the pity of others."

Things That the Blind See Clearly

"MEANTIME, I was learning sloyds, a sort of fancy scrollwork with the saw, bead and mattress making, chair caning and the eternal broom making. After I found I could do each I hated all but the sloyds. And even then I thought it funny that the teachers should keep us so everlastingly at those brooms. Kind as some of them were, just as all of them were, they seemed to think that a blind man was good for nothing else—just to make brooms that nobody wanted. Besides, much of this work, the fumbling with tools before we became used to them, the tie and yank of the hammock, though it finally resulted in some sort of manual dexterity, injured our hands. For a long time mine were a perpetual blister, and you can see this chisel cut still between thumb and forefinger. And I wanted so to play the piano. I hadn't had any music at home, in fact, remembered none but my mother's crooning; but here at school I would stand in the corner listening for hours to the older boys play. Some of them were nervous and when they found even my presence a nuisance, though I kept very quiet, they would kick me out, but I would linger outside, crouched at the crack of the door. I wanted to be a musician; and no one seemed to take me seriously.

"I was a little more fortunate perhaps than the others, for they singled me out from broom making and tried to make me into a mathematician, largely because I could do pretty hard problems in my head. Sometimes, when the state senators came, they'd have me on the platform for half an hour, showing off, calculating the percentage on large sums and finding cube roots running into long decimals, when all the time I was crazy to be at the piano.

"I didn't feel so sorry for myself as for the other fellows who didn't have even my chance—the chance I didn't want. Some of them might become tuners, it was true, but many of them were to be condemned for life to broom making. That was all right for those who were almost on the verge of idiocy, but not for the others. As it came toward graduation, young as we were, we realized this fault of the system and resented it as a reflection on us. We knew we could do other things, yet society would not have it. Often the brighter boys would talk this over, wonder sometimes why we couldn't be trained in law or salesmanship. A man could at least run a tobacco store, be told where the Royal Tiger was placed and the Juicy Flake cigarettes; and he could handle a cash register and a typewriter. There was stationery, too, and upholstery; in fact, any goods that were not perishable. There was no nonsense about this, for we realized our limitations—that we could not handle fruit and green groceries; that we might smear butter, perhaps, in tying up packages. But there were lots of things open. Why couldn't the state or some wealthy citizen advance enough money to the cleverest of us for a course in law or medicine? In the long run it would be cheaper to the state, we boyishly but farsightedly argued, and we could become additions to, instead of encumbrances on, society.

"Out of two hundred totally blind boys I have known, there were only four that later attained distinction, and all these lost their sight through injury. As I say, we realized something of that and it hurt us to be thrown in the same mill, the mentally sound with the diseased and subnormal. A few of us, through determination, afterward overcame this additional handicap thrust on us by the state. One of our group became a novelist; he had lost his sight in boyhood when fooling with a dynamite cap. Another, injured while out hunting partridges, opened an entertainment hall somewhere in Montana and is making money. And I know a girl who has just graduated with high honors from Oberlin. But they did these things themselves. If they had any temporary aid it was from some individual. Their success is not the result of our educational system.

"In this criticism of conditions as they existed in our school and do now in too many today, I don't want to be hard. Those who devote their lives to the care of the blind are the salt of the earth, often real martyrs. Foolish legislation and supervision—a lack of understanding—are often to blame.

"In the school at Los Angeles where my sister teaches, this system is followed. Blind children who are in other respects sound, are allowed, while in grammar grades, to play with the sighted; when they enter the high school they are put in the same rooms and take the same courses. The result is ideal, for these youngsters are natural and straightforward. There is no nonsense about them. When they bump into something they just laugh.

"Another important point is the individualizing, the singling out of the more alert and giving them a special education. Julliard has tried to do this for music in his liberally endowed school, and the same should be done for other professions. See what Senator Gore has done in law and Congress; and there is a famous heart specialist in Chicago; and Herreshoff, the yacht designer—all of them blind. And so much could be done in mercantile training. Why, only the other day, I ran across a man who earns \$50,000 a year at insurance, a blind man, mind you; and he has started to teach others. Some of his pupils make as much as ten thousand a year, and none less than three thousand. They just take their canes and call on prospects, then come back to the office and write up their documents on ordinary typewriters.

"Fortunately for me, my parents had enough to continue my education. I had taken up the piano while at school and I was bent on going on with my music. When I was sixteen I did my first musical composition, a cantata for orchestra and organ. For this, the boy Leslie Blayds, who later turned out a novelist, wrote the words; and it was written in blind point—that is, in intervals instead of lines and spaces. Since, I have discarded that method, preferring to dictate and so record in the regular notation—another way of keeping in touch with the normal and not shutting up oneself in the world of the blind."

Escapes From the World of the Blind

"IN 1912 I went on to Leipsic. An old lady, a friend of the family, saw me as far as that city, then, her destination being elsewhere, dumped me off at the station. For the next two and a half years I had no one to guide me but my senses and a cane and sometimes, perhaps, a helping hand. Very kind, too, were those German students, but in the main I had to shift for myself, which was just what I wanted. I didn't mind at all being in a strange country. In spite of my blindness I was full of life and had the health of youth. I would have undertaken almost anything, would have gone to Tibet or China if I had had the chance.

"Life in Leipsic was very pleasant—hearing the *Guten Morgens*, strolling in the sunshine under the lindens, or



PHOTO. BY CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

A Scene on the Coast of British Columbia

smoking and chatting with the other students around the tables in their peaceful *Biergartens*. I just made myself like them and one of them; and I certainly had an opportunity here to make outside contacts, for I was the only blind student; in fact, there had been only one other there before me. But that didn't make the curriculum any easier. I went through all the regular work with one exception—the written exercises in harmony. However, I was forced to substitute modulations at the piano stool, and that was, if anything, more difficult.

"The shortest time possible in which a student can complete this course is two years, and I finished it in that time. I mention this simply because it may encourage others like myself, who may imagine they are too badly handicapped. Determination, with attention, can more than make up for their lack of sight, if they only will let it.

"This stage over, I went to Berlin to study under Ernest Hutcheson, and stayed there until 1914, when the war broke out."

These recollections came in snatches, on different afternoons and evenings, between which we played chess, walked or drove, or I listened to his exquisite music. And he was sitting on the piano stool one afternoon, playing, when suddenly he swung around, smiled, then shot at me: "Did you know I was arrested?" He seemed boyishly gleeful over this. Evidently this arrest was, in his life, an unusual adventure, to be boyishly relished even in recollection—meant more to him even than his finest composition.

"In those first days of August, 1914," he explained, "it was hard to get home, and they were cabling frantically for me. Even old Bryan was sending word, cabled three times: 'Come home, your parents expect you,' signed W. J. B. But they could get no money through."

Seeing the Joke the Morning After

"MEANTIME, while I was waiting, we didn't think of the sadness; it was sort of a lark; and one day another student and I went down to a *Biergarten*. It was in the Kaiserplatz and, the table being full, we sat opposite two women, rather buxom, and apparently servants. In the general chatter of those days they began to talk, and looking a bit suspicious, they asked us what was our nationality. Seeing a chance for fun, we told 'em we were Danes. 'No Dane, you too dark.' Then, to kid them, we took them all over the map, finally landing in Russia. 'Yes, that's it,' we confessed, 'we're Russians, from Kieff.'

"Ach! Kieff! We relatives there *gehaben*."

"They were delighted and planned to help us get away.

"Then a bright idea struck me; lowering my voice and sticking my hand in my pocket, I confided:

"First I must kill the Kaiser. I have a bomb here and I'm going to throw it at him when he goes down Unter den Linden."

"Mackey, the other student, it appeared, also had a bomb, for he, too, stuck his hand in his pocket.

"Me for the Crown Prince," he said.

"They looked alarmed, then whispered:

"Speak quiet, we no care, but others will you arrested have. We will help you to Kieff."

"So we strung them along until it came time to go, then we showed them our American passports. They had been fooled and were very mad.

"No sooner had we left the restaurant and gone half a block than a whole Coxey's army came running after us brandishing umbrellas. 'Wait for policeman,' they cried.

"At last he came waddling up, a beefy Prussian, told them to drop the umbrellas with which they had been beating us, and said that we were under arrest for lese majesty. Mackey, being nervous, kept putting his hands in his pocket and each time he did this the crowd shied off, until a bystander explained that this was, next to chewing gum, the great American habit. Then we were marched to the police station, where the two women appeared against us. We had planned to kill the Kaiser, they swore.

"Sure, we said it," we admitted, 'but we were only joking; we're Americans.'

"Then they sat us on the bench and had a long conference. Back they came with another pompous official.

"Sure, we said it," we admitted again. 'But can't you see we were only joking? Here are our passports. We're Americans.'

"But that wouldn't do; and for six hours, until three in the morning, they kept up their agitated conferences and examinations. Finally they marched us home, where we were to stay under surveillance, and not leave the house.

"Next evening they sent for us again and the official greeted us with smiles; it had taken him twenty-four hours to see that joke. But before dismissing us he told us we were fools and not to try it again. Frederick was good-natured, he explained, but that bird, the Kaiser, got madder over lese majesty than anything else.

"Then the money at last came through. I came back to America, where I studied for two more years, practiced interminably, lived the usual student's life, often cooking for myself, then started composing."

(Continued on Page 58)



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THE BLIND LEADING THOSE THAT SEE

(Continued from Page 58)

we go it alone. She pursues her work of interior decoration, and I mine. We are apart by day, together at night."

A little later he remarked, after observing, somehow, that my cigar had gone out, and going to the table and offering me another:

"You remember when you told me that in ten minutes you forgot that I was blind. Well, that's the best compliment I've ever been paid. Others have said that too. And I can tell you I took more pride in one thing than in any other achievement. It was when at Leipsic I made good as a human being."

After all, we were not so much amazed at the thousand and one things that Roland Farley, without sight, could, and we, with it, could not do as we were by his perennial naturalness. And this characterized not only his manner but his mental processes. These were not warped by the barrier, but entirely normal. He could put himself in the place of others in whose activities he could not participate, yet which he seemed to understand. People came to him with their domestic and business troubles, and almost always he would throw some clarifying light on the problem. Apparently he had developed to the utmost his reasoning powers and every faculty; had built on what he had. For such a spirit, when one channel is dammed up the stream of life flows with increased power through the other channels.

Rating Friendship Above Sight

Even his casual conversation was significant for the point we would like to make. His talk of art, science, philosophy may be imagined as well worth while. Yet frequently it is interspersed with Jolson-like anecdotes and pat slang. This and his playing of poker had at first struck me as pathetic—the attempt of one so afflicted to be "a regular fellow." But he was not just attempting these things, but doing them well. And suddenly the light illumined these apparently trivial facts. He was not alone striving for forgetfulness or merely to develop all his powers, but striving to spare others embarrassment by meeting them as far as possible on their own plane. And this struck me as a fine, even extraordinary thing. It was then that I realized, on looking back, that he had made me forget in the first ten minutes that he was blind. I found myself arguing with him, sometimes heatedly, even snappily, giving none of that quarter one ordinarily gives the blind. Besides, one usually gives the afflicted too constrained or too casual a sympathy. He gives to others. They seek his company gladly.

This is the point of the whole story, if we have only made it clear, though of course you can't actually get on the inside of a

blind man any more than you can inhabit another's soul. But his very statements: "You can't see others, but they can see you," "Friendship is better than seeing or hearing," and even his "Blindness is no worse than a bad stomach," are brave ones, to be admired by most of us who complain rather bitterly of a blowout on the road. At any rate, I knew he was leading me. He, and not I, had the light.

Here was a blind man, then, asking no odds of anyone, least of all pity, with none of Henley's "bloody but unbowed" business about him, up and doing, content to serve, but not merely to "stand and wait"; and important, not alone for his achievements, but for what in character he has overcome.

The Light That Never Fails

Perhaps it would have been more romantic to have pictured him as pathetic, as we glimpse him sometimes at the piano. Then his features, which taken singly might be considered heavy but in the ensemble altogether noble, set in the profound stillness of the blind, have something of the repose and majesty of those far-off faces carved by Nature on the distant mountain tops.

Often the sadness, too, has struck me when I have watched him, sitting straight in his chair, the teacup on the arm, or come upon him, the mail unopened by his side; and once, more particularly, when we were to go out one evening and I found him dressing in the dark. Usually thoughtful of others, he forgot to snap on the light as I entered, and he continued dressing—put the studs in his shirt, the cuff buttons, laced his shoes and then stood before the mirror tying his tie, there in the dark. To me it was almost poignant.

But that was false; and I prefer to think of him as the manly, self-reliant figure I have seen walking so strangely erect up the winding street; again, as boyishly playing poker, going downstairs for refreshment for his guests, or playing over and over, at my four-year-old daughter's insistence, a simple waltz—all the homely unconsidered actions of each day.

What was that last story he told us? "My friend O'Malley, the painter," he said with a chuckle, "is deaf. But he says, 'Nobody need feel sorry for me. I miss all the small talk. And if anyone does say anything to me, they have to shout so, I know it must be important.'"

"By the way, he raves about my music, I about his painting. Deaf and blind—a friend says it's the most disinterested friendship he has ever seen."

And all this with a chuckle! And in the story's telling there is the vision of a man who, for all his blindness, sees straight. Some lights may be dimmed, but, after all, there's one that never goes out.

Class Two

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